Met Office

NEWS

Are you WeatherReady?

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New research from the Met Office suggests that 55% of people in the UK with vulnerable neighbours or relatives would check on them ahead of severe winter weather.

- 55% of people in the UK with vulnerable relatives or neighbours would check on them ahead of severe weather.
- Northern England scored highest, with 63% of those with vulnerable neighbours or relatives checking on them.
- 41% said winter weather has a negative impact on their mental health.
- 42% said they have been caught out by severe winter weather.

Research conducted by YouGov on behalf of the Met Office highlights regional differences across the UK on who would check on elderly or vulnerable neighbours ahead of severe weather.

Regionally, northern England topped the survey of over 2,000 people, with 63% of those eligible saying they would check on neighbours or relatives. Wales is next with 60%, the Midlands reached 57%, Scotland 56%, southern England and eastern England each reached 52%. London had just 44% of those who were eligible stating that they would check on a vulnerable neighbour or relative ahead of severe weather.

Met Office Meteorologist and resilience expert Will Lang, who leads responses in times of severe weather, said: “Severe winter weather can impact us all, but it’s important to remember that some are more vulnerable than others, especially the elderly and those with underlying health conditions.

“Ahead of severe weather, I’d encourage anyone to check on people they know could be vulnerable and help them take steps to keep safe this winter.”

The survey comes as the Met Office launches its winter WeatherReady campaign, which aims to help us all take action to minimise the impacts of severe weather this winter.

Caught out by winter weather

After a summer of record-breaking temperatures, the new research reveals what people in the UK do to prepare for severe winter weather to avoid accidents or damage.

42% of those surveyed admitted they had been caught out by severe winter weather, with common issues including being late for work, cancelling social plans and having difficulties around the house or in the garden.

Of those who were caught out by severe winter weather, 37% said they could not go to work, while 25% reported clothes getting ruined in wet weather. At home, 37% reported issues with fencing, gutters or garden furniture as a result of the weather, highlighting the need for people to be prepared when it comes to winter weather.

Mental health

With winter weather keeping people indoors more often, 41% of those surveyed felt their mental health is negatively impacted, with those reporting anxiety around certain weather types, going out and about, and being forced to stay at home more often.

Stephen Buckley, Head of Information at Mind, said: "We're concerned but not surprised that 2 in 5 of those polled said their mental health was affected by weather this winter. For some of us, winter may be a difficult time for our mental health. We may find that the short days and cold weather affect how we feel.

"This winter has the potential to be a particularly challenging time for people's mental health with cost-of-living pressures so it's important that we all take chances to get outside when we can, connect with others and try to eat well. If you do struggle with your mental health this winter, please know Mind and other mental health organisations are here to support you. If you need help, please don't hesitate to reach out."

Of those who said their mental health was negatively impacted by winter weather, 70% said it makes them stay at home more often. As well as advice from Mind around mental health, WeatherReady includes expert knowledge from Ordnance Survey on how to get the most out of winter weather and getting out and about safely.

OS Managing Director for Leisure, Nick Giles said: "We know there are many barriers that stop people going outside in winter, particularly when the weather is bad or if there is worry about icy conditions.

"But we also know spending time outdoors has a huge positive impact on people's mental health.

“People who are more physically active have lower rates of depression, they have improved happiness and a single bout of exercise can dramatically impact on mood for the better.

“So if it is a mild day that is safe to go out in this winter, we urge people to get their winter coats on and get outside, no matter even if it is for a short time.”

Met Office
HM Government
Are you WeatherReady?
Look after your health and wellbeing this winter
Get your flu jab
Exercise and eat well
Make the most of the natural light
Check in on elderly or vulnerable neighbours
Store key information and phone numbers somewhere safe

Preparing for severe weather

The research also highlights preparedness actions that people take ahead of winter weather, with over half (51%) checking their heating system and 52% putting things away in the garden. 40% also said they would prepare their car for winter travel.

Despite so many admitting being caught out by winter weather in the past, more than three quarters (77%) said they felt prepared for winter weather, with only 15% admitting they didn’t feel prepared.

Will Lang continued: “People can take just a few simple steps ahead of winter in order to help mitigate the impacts. Whether that’s preparing your garden, clearing your gutters or ensuring you have an emergency kit prepared, these small steps now can save hassle in times of severe weather and can make sure people can make the most of it. WeatherReady brings together lots of helpful advice from our expert partners so people know exactly what they can do to prepare ahead of impactful weather.”

Roger Hargreaves, Director of the COBR Unit, said: “The past twelve months have demonstrated the impact that severe weather can have on UK lives and livelihoods, highlighted in particular by Storms Arwen and Eunice, as well as the record-breaking heatwave in July. The Met Office WeatherReady campaign provides a really helpful set of actions which all of us can take to help mitigate the risks posed by severe weather, and I would encourage everyone, particularly those susceptible to low temperatures, to engage with the material in the weeks prior to winter.”

Access WeatherReady advice to get prepared for winter weather.

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